Suzanne Hausammann  India in Colour
Oh! images of India! So many images. Multi-coloured images. Rich flat lands. Terraces of hills in the valleys below high mountains. Cattle grazing or yoked to the plough. Small stalls and booths, selling anything from lentils to beads. Narrow bazaars, invariably ending in temples or mosques, built with donations from worshippers, where all life is holy from the Tulsi plant to the monkey and the bull, and where ascetics abound. Rivers on whose banks bathes a myriad humanity, under the shadow of beautiful houses, the palaces of the rich, or of old shrines. Roads grooved by the eternal wheels of the bullock cart, dusty with the passage of caravans, of camels, horses and motor cars, where the road menders are ever busy breaking piles of stones. Cavalcade of workers engaged in pulling vehicles, or wielding modern machine tools in giant mills. New cement and concrete structures, side by side with the giant remnants of monuments from the hoary past of 3000 years. Fabrics of utmost delicacy, spun and woven by masterly hands. Pylons conveying power from hydro-electric works. Atomic stations, with reactors promising a brave new world!
Such a medley of forms cannot be captured entire. The content cannot be swallowed. The human eye can absorb only a small part and make this microcosm represent the macrocosm. The concrete thus becomes the Universal symbol. And life can begin to be understood through the creative vision of the artist.

It was perhaps in this spirit that Suzanne Hausammann exposed the lens of her camera to certain scenes of the intricate details of the Indian landscape. A poet of the most humane sensibility, she allowed the colours and the shapes to act upon her, in certain moments of internal crisis, through which she seems to have sensed the movement behind the outer surface of life on this vast earth of ours. Colour has its own life and tenderness for her. A kind of pure interest which finds the pattern or design, just as music finds its pictorial representation in the Hindu Ragmala paintings.

The depth of the theme is suggested by deliberate overexposure or underexposure, as though the instrument of vision was shifted even while the picture was being taken. The planes overlap and shades of colours are formed into new mixtures of tints reminiscent of India’s past.

So that, behind the smallest fragment, or the totality, the creative will of the artist resurrects intimations of some of the profoundest moments in our experience.

Let us try and sift these images of Suzanne Hausammann into the pattern of India. For, even so miscellaneous and apparently discordant a collection of images, forms part of a design of the contemporary situation in India’s destiny, which is the residue of our country’s old memories, as it is also a reservoir of the dynamic future.
THE MIXING OF THE STRAINS

If you look at the map of the world, India is the name of a triangular land, with the Himalayan range on the north and a peninsula tapering off into the Indian Ocean. During the five thousand years of its known history the population of this country has not changed very much. The successive waves of conquest brought new languages, religions and cultures to India. But the conquerors intermarried with the original stock, so that it is now hardly distinguishable.

Skull measurements in prehistoric tombs show three main original stocks. These have been blending evenly until this day. The main stocks were:

1. The Dravidian – a dark race, akin to the older stock found in Southern Arabia and North Eastern Africa;

2. The Mediterranean scattered from Spain to the Ganges plane;

3. The Mongolian – mostly descending from the deserts and steppes of Central Asia.
The Dravidian element though dispersed all over India through the ages is now especially concentrated in the South. The Mongolian strain has spread across Bengal and the North East Region, from Assam, Bhutan and Sikkim. And there are several surviving aboriginal tribes of which some seem to be akin to the Melanesians of the Pacific Ocean islands retaining their primitive cultures intact. In the last thousand years or so there have been incursions of Arab and Portuguese blood and also emigrants from Iran like the Parsees. The mixing of the various strains and the co-existence of various races and peoples in one land has led foreigners to describe India as one of the strangest facts of history. The Indians themselves consider their land as a miniature world, in which the windows of all the houses are opened to receive fresh breezes and no door is closed to anyone who cares to knock at it.

MOHENJO-DARO and HARRAPPA

Our knowledge of India’s past has been revolutionised in recent years by the discovery of two ancient sites in the Indus Valley namely at Mohenjo-daro and Harrappa. Ostensibly, there flourished, round about 3000 years before Christ, a high city civilisation like that of Sumeria in the Middle East and quite as advanced. These cities were solidly built of red burnt bricks. They were based on a regular rectangular plan with an elaborate system of sewers and superb public baths. They had evolved all the arts and crafts of the bronze age. They grew and wove cotton and traded with overseas countries in vessels rather like the surviving sail boat. They baked small terracotta toys and statues of human beings, animals and birds. They engraved an old script on seals. They used bullock carts for carrying farm products even as they use them
today. They beat gold into the shapes of jewellery. Apparently they were not fighting peoples because instruments of war have not been found on these sites. But from hints given by their little figurines and statues they worshipped Siva and the Earth Goddess as Mother of creation. They had an ascetic discipline of prayer. They probably also had various cults of tree spirits. The social structure was like that of early Egypt. Although, there is scanty evidence for saying this, it is probable that a very similar civilisation was widely spread even at this early date across northern India and in the whole sister Mediterranean belt up to Crete and Etruria.

THE ARYANS AND DRAVIDIANS

After Mohenjo-daro and Harrappa, there is a big gap in our history. We only know that waves of Aryan tribes came about 2750 B.C. and slowly penetrated the north and central parts of the peninsula. Probably what happened in Greece a few centuries later also happened in India a little earlier. The blond barbaric, Dorian Conquerors fell upon the elaborate civilisation of the Aegean Sea, smashed it and looted it, but learnt some of its lessons before it perished, and in the end built out of it the nobler Hellenic culture. The Aryans must have been formidable warriors, who brought superior weapons with them and crushed the Dravidians. But the invaders were mostly an illiterate people with a pastoral cattle grazing culture far behind that of the natives they subdued. They had, however, like the Hellenes, an exquisite instrument for thought in the poetical Indo-European language called Sanskrit. They mingled with the conquered Dravidian peoples and imposed their language on them over the north and centre of India. The languages
spoken over these regions, Punjabi, Hindi, Bengali, Marathi and Gujarati today are descended from ancient Sanskrit. The Aryans acquired writing and the other arts from the Dravidian priests, as also their worship of many Gods and spirits, such as tree spirits, snake-souls, fauns, dryads and nymphs. They never conquered the South or imposed their language on that region. But the use of Sanskrit as a sacred tongue spread everywhere through the beautiful hymns of their books, the Vedas. And a composite Aryan-Dravidian culture arose, which produced many jewels of thoughts and a great literature in the two epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. In the hymn of creation, sung by the bard of one of the first books, the *Rig-Veda*, we have one of the most daring poems about the origin of the world:

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DARKNESS AT FIRST WAS COVERED BY DARKNESS
THE UNIVERSE WAS DISTINCT AND FLUID
THE EMPTY SPACE THAT BY THE VOID WAS HIDDEN,
THAT ONE WAS BY THE FORCE OF HEAT ENGENDERED.
DESIRE THEN AT FIRST AROSE WITHIN IT
DESIRE WHICH WAS THE EARLY SEED OF SPIRIT
THE BOND OF BEING IN THE NON-BEING SAGES
DISCOVERED SEARCHINGS IN THEIR HEARTS WITH WISDOM
WHO KNOWS IT TRULY? WHO CAN HERE DECLARE IT?
WHENCE WAS IT BORN? WHENCE ISSUED THIS CREATION?
AND DID THE GODS APPEAR WITH ITS PREDICTION?
BUT THEN, WHO KNOWS FROM WHENCE IT HAS ARISEN.
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The Hindu religion, as we know it today, has emerged from the early books, the Vedas and the later Upanishads, thought out in the forests by ascetics. It rejects nothing and embraces all kinds of beliefs, sacrifices, and rites. It believes in the one God, Brahma, of which the other gods are manifestations.
Brahma the Creator is in everything. Men aspire to be one with Him through meditation and prayer. In the first flush of conquest, the white nordic Aryans looked down upon the dark Dravidians. And mainly from this distinction of *Varna*, colour, as well as from occupations arose the unique and puzzling system of caste. This system survives until the present day, on the basis of hereditary occupations though new legislation has abolished discrimination. On the top there was, and is, a highly privileged priestly caste—the Brahmins. Next, the Kshatriyas, the Warriors. Then the Vaishyas, mostly merchants. Last of all were the Sudras and outcastes or untouchables. Nowhere in the world can we find a parallel to the rigidity of this system. It limited social intimacy and allowed marriage only within one’s own caste or subcaste. The caste system is not supposed to be present nowadays. Happily, the custom is disappearing through the impact of the new machine civilisation.

**THE SELF-SUFFICIENT INDIAN VILLAGE**

All through the process of conquest and war, while kingdom rose and kingdom fell in the capitals of the princes, the real unit of Indian life remained the self-governing village. The small community living in this unit had common grazing land. The peasants who lived in it had the right to till the land around the village without owning the land, which belonged to all. The weaver, the potter, the smith and the teacher were paid for their services in grain. And the self-sufficient village paid tribute to the local prince in kind for his responsibility in defending the land, supplying water and keeping tracks in good repair. If people ask how India survived the great vicissitudes of the early times and after, the answer may be that the self-suf-
ficient village, which was a basis of Indian civilisation, survived even when the capital cities changed hands. In this static unit with its unvarying social life were also the seeds of its decay and backwardness, as we can see today.

THE REVOLT AGAINST HINDUISM OF THE JINA AND THE BUDDHA

After about the first thousand years of the Aryan conquest the social order seems to have become petrified. The caste system became rigid and the priests highly corrupt. At this stage, Vardhman later called Jina, tried to break away from Hindu religion and to preach a gospel of concern for men, animals and plants alike, because he believed that everything has life. After the Jina, there arose one of the greatest figures of human history, the Buddha. He was a young prince born in the lower borders of Nepal, in Kapilavastu, and his first name was Gautama. On seeing the pain and misery around him, he renounced the richer life of the palace. He wandered as an ascetic across northern India arguing with the Brahmins against caste and superstition. One day after many months of penance and meditation, he felt he had received illumination, that is to say he became the Buddha, the Enlightened One. He then preached the path of good deeds, good thought and good words. He asked men to bring compassion and tenderness towards every living thing. And he promised Nirvana, Salvation to those who would walk on the right path. Gautama the Buddha died in 504 B.C. But his disciples carried his message all over India and far into South East Asia, China, Korea and Japan. The negative teaching of early Buddhism was relaxed about a hundred years later. And a great many rock-cut temples and monasteries came to be built, housing the imaginary relics of the Buddha.
This stream of Buddhist art flowed from Barhut and Sanchi in the north to the cave temples of Western India: Karli, Bhaja, Bedsa and Kondane. From here the monasteries spread towards Ajanta, where the wall paintings and sculpture are replete with the most tender sense of human life, rendered with superb mastery of technical expression. The sister shrines of Nagarjunakonda and Amaravati carried Buddhist art further south. Thence the influences travel across the seas, to Siam, Java and Cambodia. This art derived many of its forms from the Greeks who were left in the North after the invasion of India in 342 by Alexander of Macedonia. The foreign elements were, however, assimilated by a dynasty of Buddhist kings called the Mauryas. Their kingdom spread far from Central Asia in the North to Kalinga in the South East. Under its most famous emperor Ashoka (263–223 B.C.) the greater part of the Indian Peninsula seems to have been united more firmly than at any time before or since.

THE GOLDEN AGE OF INDIAN CULTURE

This humane Buddhist civilisation soon found itself being counter-attacked by waves of Hindu revival. The conflict between the two ways of life was not resolved. But, through this very tension, there appeared a reascent literature and art, rich, vital and intense. In fact, the period from the 1st century B.C. to about the 5th century A.D. has been called the Golden Age of Indian Culture. The dynasty of Gupta Kings who ruled India at that time extended contacts with the outside world and patronised the arts so that the lives of the upper and middle strata of the population were ennobled by the expression of sublime truths in stone, in paint and in words. Kalidas, the Indian Shakespeare, flourished in one of these splendid courts. The
princes who succeeded the Guptas in the early mediaeval period were devoted to the Hindu revival but did not succeed in creating political or social unity in the country.

THE WAVES OF FOREIGN INVASION

Into this divided India burst the waves of Mohammedan invasion in the 11th century. The first conqueror Mahmud of Gazni raided northern India seventeen times. It was not the strength of his armies which won for him victory after victory but the disunity and weakness of the native princes that led to the betrayal and alien occupation. Mahmud could not extend his empire beyond the Punjab and part of Central India, but his heirs reigned in the area for nearly 150 years. In spite of the danger in their midst, the Rajput princes failed to unite. And in the last decade of the 12th century, a second wave of Afghan conquest under Sultan Mohammad of Ghor, spread, this time permanently, all over Northern India from Lahore to Delhi and thence to Bengal. These Muslim princes made Delhi the capital of a loosely knit empire, which took tribute from many feudatory nobles and generals. The empire spread also to the Deccan, though its hold in the South was weak, until the centre itself was shaken by the savage Mongol invasion of Tamurlane in 1398. At the end of the period of the last Afghan dynasty a revival of Hindu power under Rajput leadership was on the point of overthrowing the empire of Delhi, when a new conqueror broke in from the North. This was Babur, a descendant of Tamurlane, who captured Delhi in 1526. He broke the rising Rajput power and founded the Mughal empire which remained the paramount power in India until its decay on the eve of the British conquest. Under Akbar the Great, the grandson of Babur,
India achieved a measure of centralisation and unity which had not been realised since the reign of Ashoka in the 3rd century B.C. or under the Guptas in the 4th century A.D. This powerful but tolerant prince tried to reconcile his Hindu and Mohammedan subjects. He even thought of a common religion, which both could accept. The new religion failed, but a great cultural awakening began under Akbar. The poetry, the painting, the architecture, the music and dance, all show the exquisite mingling of the indigenous Indian, Persian and Central Asian influences. Apart from the old fort in Delhi and the tomb of his father, Humayun, Akbar's reign saw the building of a new model city at Fatehpur Sikri as well as the Red Fort in Agra. The Emperor designed his own tomb at Sikandra which was to inspire his successors with its design. The noble traditions of Akbar were sustained by his son Jahangir, who patronised many court painters and wrote his own memoirs. And Shahjahan, the grandson of Akbar, was an inveterate builder being responsible for the extensions of Agra Fort, the Red Fort, the Jumma Masjid and the celebrated Taj Mahal at Agra. But the later and weaker Mughals exercised only a nominal leadership over the virtually independent Satraps and soldiers of the more distant provinces of the empire. The polite arts also progressively declined and the religious bigotry of the princes, specially Aurangazeb, let loose a vast anarchy. The Mohammedan rule in India stretching over nearly eight hundred years affected the various regions of the peninsula in various degrees. The influence was at its maximum in the North West and at its minimum in the South. The intermixture through marriage introduced a certain amount of alien blood. But as almost all the invaders settled down, they merged with the local population. At any rate, the Afgans are not by race or even by language a foreign stock in India. And a Mongolian element had been present from earlier periods. Therefore, it is reasonably certain, that the great mass of the Muslim population is descended from the Hindus who embraced Islam either to preserve their lands or to escape from the caste system. The faith bequeathed by the Prophet Mohammed recognised neither race nor colour nor caste and it brought a healthy gospel to India. There were periods of iconoclasm and persecution, but these were brief. After the period of struggle the Muslim rulers usually ended by employing Hindu officials and even by marrying Hindu princesses. In the villages there was little tension between the two creeds. And though both the earlier Afghan and Tartar conquerors were primitive, they brought in their wake the love of glory and
pomp and patronised various men of culture from different parts of Asia and the West. Indian civilisation of the 16th century, with its sensitive art, its rich literatures and its astonishing handicrafts was a proud achievement, broadly the equal and in some respects perhaps the superior of the cultural attainments of the then contemporary Europe.

Unfortunately however the Indian civilisation of this period remained static, because the village life, based on primitive agriculture, was moribund, canals and roads were neglected. And no new class arose like the mercantile class of the west of the same period, to bring movement into the stagnant political and economic structures of this country. The only spontaneous developments came with the marching armies through which the imperial dynasty sought to hold the country together. These waves passed over the villages with the customary loot. No reformation was at work in the field of thought. Above all, Indian speculation was based, not on the experimental methods of science which had brought the illumination of renaissance to Europe but on mystic faiths of which the keys were held by a few priests and ascetics. So when the impact on the West was felt in India, the technical advantage was on the side of Europe, which had far outrun the countries of Asia in Industry and Social advance.

During the 18th century the organised might of the British East India Company slowly but surely gained control of the bulk of the subcontinent of India. The divided peoples seemed to fade out of history almost like wrecks of the past, doomed to be shadows in the obscure background of seven hundred thousand villages which dotted the country. After prolonged battles for the occupation of the entire landscape, the Company met with final resistance in the revolt of 1857. The corruption of the Company’s officials and its mismanagement was ended on the termination of the hostilities by the assumption of authority over India by the British Crown and Parliament. A semblance of political unity was restored to the country and certain reforms carried out which brought stability for a time. The central Bureaucracy ruled under a Viceroy who was responsible to the Secretary of State for India in the British Parliament. The need to transport armies and merchandise imported to India from Great Britain led to the laying of hundred of miles on the railway track which knit the country together. Public works began to claim attention. And an attempt was made to win over the upper orders of Indian Society by the introduction of a new kind of land system. A
semi-independent princely States. The two five-year plans sponsored by the democratic Indian Parliament have set going the process of social and economic advance through a mixed private and public economy. The cultural life of the country has been enriched by the provision of new opportunities for the creative arts. The prospects of Indian civilisation seem to depend in the opinion of the advanced intelligentsia, upon the ability of the Indian people to adopt the material forms of the West without being victims of the typical Western inability to see beyond goods and merchandise — that is to say by the genius to see the goods as the means to an end beyond the goods instead of mistaking them for ends in themselves.
number of landlords were vested with vast estates. They paid a fixed revenue to the British Sirkar but they could levy as much tax as they liked from their tenants. This indirect oppression led the peasants to leave the land and become a potential proletariat in the big towns. The British saw the opportunity of utilising this labour force for industrial development and the factory system began in full swing as it had done a little earlier in Great Britain. There was a great boon through the coming of industry for a period. But then the cheaper finished goods produced in India through cheap labour and smaller freight charges began to offer intense competition to the finished goods from the United Kingdom. So the industrial development of India was slowed down. This led to discontent among the rising Indian merchant classes and the intelligentsia. For once the forces of machine civilisation had begun to operate in the country and the steam engine and a central government had bound the various parts of India together, all those processes were set going which had been witnessed in the progress of industry in the West. The caste system began to give place to a class society. The people became conscious of the exploitation of their resources by the alien rulers. And the intelligentsia inspired by the libertarian ideas of the West, specially of the British Parliamentary democracy, began to demand freedom. The Indian National Congress led by English and Indian liberal leaders came into being to unite all those who stood for responsible self-government. At the turn of the century there appeared a man of undoubted political genius, Mahatma Gandhi. He knew the pulse of the masses and he evolved a new method of struggle against foreign rule with non-violence and non-co-operation as the main weapon. Opinion had been growing specially in liberal circles in Great Britain that India's demand for freedom should be conceded. In 1945 a strong mission was sent by the British Parliament to negotiate the transfer of power. The discussions were held up through the insistence by the Muslim leader, Jinnah on a separate Islamic state of Pakistan. The deadlock was ended by the declaration of two independent dominions of India and Pakistan on the 14th of August 1947. This led to bitter partitional riots in Punjab and Bengal. But nevertheless the much longed freedom had come. And now India set itself to the task of building a new constitution and a good life for its people. During the last ten years our country has become a Republic, while still maintaining its link with the British Commonwealth. And its various territories have been integrated through the accession, to the Indian Union, of the erstwhile
PRITHVI, THE "KINDLY MOTHER EARTH"

Prithvi, the earth, is praised in the earliest books of the Hindus. She quickens the soil for she scatters the rain, and the showers of heaven are shed from the lightning of her cloud. She is great (mahā), firm (dīrgha) and shining (arjuni).

... The following lines from the Atharva Veda give some indication of the reverence in which the earth has been held:

MAY SHE WHOSE HEART IS IN THE HIGHEST HEAVEN, COMPASSED ABOUT WITH TRUTH, AND EVERLASTING - MAY SHE, THIS EARTH, BESTOW UPON US LUSTRE, AND GRANT US POWER IN LOFHEST DOMINION!...

KIND, EVER GRACIOUS BE THE EARTH WE TREAD ON, - THE FIRM EARTH, PRITHVI, BORNE UP BY ORDER, MOTHER OF PLANTS AND HERBS, THE ALL-PRODUCER.

MAY THAT EARTH GRANT US BREATH AND VITAL POWER!

PRITHVI, GIVE ME LIFE OF LONG DURATION!...

BE GRACIOUS UNTO US, O EARTH! LET NOT THE ROBBERS FIND US! KEEP THE DEADLY WEAPON FAR AWAY!...

EARTH! MAY THY SUMMER AND THY RAINS AND AUTUMN, THY WINTER AND THY DEWY FROSTS AND SPRINGTIME - MAY THY YEARS, PRITHVI! AND ORDERED SEASONS AND DAY AND NIGHT POUR OUT FOR US ABUNDANCE!...

MAY SHE, THE EARTH, ASSIGN TO US OPULENCE FOR WHICH WE YEARN O EARTH, MY MOTHER! SET THOU ME HAPPILY IN A PLACE SECURE!

Atharva Veda 12.1.8.
As in all simple pastoral societies from times immemorial the cow has been much loved in India. Red, black, dappled and light-coloured cows are spoken of. The herds were marked out from each other with distinctive nicks cut in the ears, as cattle was the main wealth of the people.

The cow's milk has been preferred, in the diet, to buffalo milk, as the former is lighter and the latter heavier for the digestion. And it has been taken either fresh, or as curds, or in the form of butter and, occasionally, cream cheese.

The oxen have been used for the purpose of farm transport, yoked to the primitive bullock cart, which has survived for three thousand years.

The 'slaying of cows for guests' was the sign of the greatest hospitality in ancient India. One hymn of the *Rig-Veda* lovingly sings:

> 'The trial fork of the flesh-cooking cauldron, the vessel out of which the broth is poured,
> The warming pots, the covers of the dishes, hooks, carving boards.'

And the God Indra was a champion beef eater.

But the eating of beef became a taboo later, and the taboo has persisted till today. This may have been due to the need, at one time, to preserve precious cattle wealth, or to the emergence of the Hindu and Buddhist doctrines of *Ahimsa* and the ritual prohibition of all flesh foods. All the same the cow has been regarded as 'mother', the giver of blessings and often worshipped, even as the holy bull is allowed to roam around the streets and pilfer vegetables from the unwary shopkeeper.
THE BAZAAR

In the ruins of Mohenjo-daro of about 3000 years ago, we find evidence of airy wide streets which were obviously full of shops.

And, since the earliest times, we find mention of merchants who bought and sold things in small quantities, or traded with foreign countries as wholesalers. In the classical literature of the 4th century A.D., we meet merchants who lent money to the kings.

And, throughout India's long history, the people of this land have shown a remarkable talent for making money, in spite of their well known spiritual attitude towards life. In fact, the Hindu religion prescribes to the ordinary householder a certain period of life (Artha) for the express purpose of piling up worldly goods.

So India early evolved the many professional trades, which were responsible for producing the necessities of life. The weavers wove many intricate patterns of cloth, dyed in colours made from plants; the silver, copper, bronze and iron-smiths embellished the householder's life with decorations on useful articles of the richest variety; the perfumers extracted essences of flowers for the most delicate perfumes; the leather-workers cured skins of animals and made good harnesses for horses and bullocks; and foodmakers and confectioners knew how to mix various ingredients for the satisfaction of the most refined palates.

For centuries, then, in the old cities and towns of India there have been bazaars dealing in special goods, like the cloth market, the salt market, or the market for vegetables.

After the impact on India of Europe, in the 18th century, the patterns of the old city streets began to change and all kinds of shops began to flourish side by side with each other. The grocer's stall often stocked cigarettes and coloured glasses and cheap mirrors, while the cloth shop sold both hand-woven and machine
made goods. Colourful as the shops always were, they began to be crowded with the products of the East and the West, and the pressure on space increased, making the shops small in comparison with man’s multiplying needs.

Today, in the bigger towns, there is a tendency to widen the streets and to bring in the shop window display of the West, though the best shopping is still in the narrow bazaars, where one can haggle about prices and indulge in the illusion of beating the unbeatable while earning a small something for the children as huckster’s profit.

THE TEMPLE
AS THE HOUSE AND BODY OF GOD

In its anthropomorphic form, the temple corresponds to a scheme, in which dwells, as his house and body the spirit, or God, enshrined, held and communicated by the embrace of its walls, whose substance is Prakriti, the earth.

15/16 In the monkey-temple of Benares
17 Inside of the monkey-temple
18 Detail of mosaic in the Mausoleum of Itmad-Ud-Daula, near Agra
19 Sandal-wood, used for burning on holy shrines as a perfumed offering to the Gods
20 Landscape near the Agra Fort
21 Ajanta Caves
22 Detail of a temple-front in Benares
Benares, the ancient city of Hinduism, is on the banks of the river Ganges in Uttar Pradesh, where several incarnations of the Hindu mind have, for centuries, struggled, through the welter of ritual, to their own individual ideas of salvation from the trammels of this world.

Outwardly, the golden spires of hundreds of temples on the crumbling river front, divided by narrow twisted by-ways, with crowds of glistening bodies, bathing and praying, impresses the onlooker like a fascinating tableau from soma to the epic drama of the spirit. But if one goes searching into the temples, among the gods of stone and clay daubed with red paint, and standing impassive in the acrid corruption of milk and flower petals and cow dung, one is somewhat repelled by the squalor of this ritualistic worship. All the gods of the Hindus are here. Vishnu, the blessed one, with his spouse Laxmi; Siva, the mighty destroyer and preserver of the world; and Kali, the mother goddess who wears a garland of skulls around her neck and demands blood sacrifice for appeasement. But to understand them the worshipper is required
to look inwards, to use the idols only as a means for contemplation, and proceed, through his own burning unconscious, to the great creator. Brahma, is one, unity, and thus the highest aspiration of the dualistic, multiple universe of mankind.

The river Ganges sweeps in a beautiful curve, past the squalid sanctuaries and the palaces that have grown on the east bank, pigeons fluttering among the cupolas and little tamarind trees and flag poles and straw umbrellas.

As the mother Ganges is said to have sprung from the feet of the God Vishnu, the worshippers drink from its waters, however soiled at places by sewers or ashes of the dead, because her constantly ruined waters make the eyes of the living shine and sanctify the parted lips of the dead.

The peasants and priests and the small townsmen, rich merchants and lean ascetics, who throng from all parts of the country to the bathing ghats, just offer flowers and rinse their mouths in the holy waters. After this they enter, offering water lustrations to the four corners of the universe, and to the nearby risen sun, pronouncing the words of the Gayatri hymn.

A dip in the river and the devout return to the slippery river steps, reciting the many names of the supreme God.

These names and forms of God are meaningless if one cannot enter into the pathways of the spirit, as it goes in search of the meaning of meaning, urged by the desire to know the inner world of faculty and experience beyond Maya, the illusory veils of existence.
But the fellow-travellers on the difficult road understand that Brahma is beyond names and forms, and requires dedication, for no logic can explain him and he is approachable only through direct intuition. This insight itself depends on certain laws of mental involution which require long practice of concentration on a symbol, such as Aum, that may quicken the inner consciousness and reveal the mystery of mysteries in a flash. The mystics who have had experience of realising the Supreme God only describe him negatively. 'He is not this! He is not that!' The union with Brahma is, however, like a rapture which fills the mind, the heart and the body, that is to say, the whole self, with ultimate Bliss (Ananda), reducing the ant-heap of all mundane human activities into their proper perspective as the subsidiary activities of mankind. This and other similar philosophies have been the preoccupation of millions of pilgrims to the banks of the Ganges at holy Benares, the secret aspiration of their meditations as they pray, morning and evening, on the ghats, though, inside the temples and seminaries of the city, there has gone on a subtle argument about the various paths leading to salvation. One of the greatest revolts against this main doctrine of the Brahmins, here in Benares, was that of the Prince Siddhartha, (sixth century B.C.), who became Buddha, the Enlightened One, by following his own struggle in Samadhi under the Bodhi tree at Bodh Gaya in Bihar. He returned to Benares and gave his just sermon in the deer park in nearby Sarnath, since then a place of pilgrimage of the Buddhists from all parts of the world. He said nothing about God, but directed the lowliest and the highest of men towards Nirvana, a reservoir of Bliss, to be reached through the eightfold path of right moral conduct, and through karuna (compassion) for every living and breathing thing.
The Mohammadan Emperor, Aurangzeb, built a mosque in Benares, the minarets of which dominate the banks of the Ganges. And the Christians from the West have built churches in the cantonment. But none of these faiths have affected the comprehensive pantheism of Hindu belief as practiced in the shrines and on the shores of the mother Ganges until today.

Only the railway bridge across the river, built by the British in the 19th century, presents a contrast between the city of abstractions, partially hidden behind the sun mist, and the modern age of steam engine and atomic power.
Blossoms embellish the trees, lightning
lends beauty to heavy rainclouds;
lotus and water-lilies,
with their drunken bees,
bejewel the waters of the lake:
but the virtues, in all their perfection,
are the true adornment of mankind.
In the midst of the crowded city of Calcutta, there is this modern Jain temple, rather ornate and mixed Indo-European in its style, with precious stones embedded in the decorative friezes, which witnesses to the wealth of the community that has brought it into being. From this point of view, the shrine is symbolic of the twin urges of modern India, to retain the old sense of religion and to grow wealthy.

Actually, however, the Jain religion was, from ancient times, characterised by the intense tenderness of its founder, Mahavira the Jina, for everything in life. In many respects, this sensitiveness to all living things had preceded the belief of the Buddha in the love for everything living and breathing and had also influenced the Hindu doctrine of non-hurting of anyone.

The Jains have retained, through the ages, the tenets of Mahavira’s faith and are strict vegetarians. Even today, the Jain monks and nuns wear a piece of cloth against their noses so as not to kill minute insects, while breathing—at least they are supposed to avoid killing these insects deliberately, even though the inhale and exhale of breath does in fact kill living things. Apart from non meat-eating, the Jains avoid all intoxicating drinks. They are a pious, hard working community mostly dedicated to shop-keeping. The monks of their clergy are divided into two different orders Digambara (or the sky-clad or naked) and the Svetambara (clad in white).
BUDDHA AS YOGI

The enlightenment of the Buddha took place through prolonged ascetic discipline in the stance of Yoga. As Prince Siddhartha, or Gautama as he was called, he had been profoundly affected by the pain and sorrow that he saw in life. The ancient poet, Advagosha, describes how one day Siddhartha, riding in the country, saw a piece of land being ploughed, with the path of the plough being broken like waves of the water ...

And, regarding the men as they ploughed, their faces soiled by dust, scorched by the sun, and chafed by the wind, and their cattle bewildered by the burden of drawing, the All-Noble One felt utter compassion, and, alighting from the back of his horse, he passed slowly over the earth, overcome with sorrow, pondering the birth and destruction proceeding in the world.

This tender humanism possessed him, and, renouncing his princely state, he proceeded to search for the meaning of life. He discussed the various ways of seeking the truth with the learned men, but, rejecting much of their rituals, began to practice Yoga contemplation.

The essence of Yoga (union) lies in the concentration of thought upon a single point, so that the duality of subject and object is resolved into a perfect unity, the perceiving self merging in the self-percieved. There is a beautiful description of the stance of the devotee in the Hindu prayer book, the Bhagavad Gita:

'Abiding alone in a secret place, without craving and without possessions, he shall take his seat upon a firm seat, neither over-high nor over-low, and, with the working of the mind and the senses held in check, with body, head and neck maintained in perfect equipoise, looking not round about him, so let him meditate, and thereby reach the peace of the Abyss: and the likeness of one such, who knows the boundless joy that lies beyond the senses and is grasped by intuition, and who swerves not from Truth, as that of a lamp in a windless place that flickers not.'
The roads and tracks of India are ever busy day and night; they are the arteries of the sub-continent through which life flows.

The peasants carry their cash-crops on their heads towards the market town.

The small merchants carry their wares from the market-town to the village. The bullock-cart plies, along the age-old grooves in the roads, almost without the help of the driver. The modern lorry, or public carrier, transports goods from one town to the other. And, occasionally, those who cannot afford the bus-fare or the railway-fare, go trudging along the highways and the by-ways, with all their worldly goods loaded on their backs, or on donkeys, ponies, mules or camels.

The traveller on the road of life has become a metaphor of poetry, because the road begins somewhere in the unknown and goes, by many stages, towards a destination which is also unknown. In the feudal past of India, in the unsettled times, people often did not know where they would rest or ultimately go, as they travelled incessantly in search of security and food. And the fatalistic poetic image inevitably became part of our consciousness. In the modern period came the roads and the railways. And distances broke down. The traffic became constant. The static, moribund life of the village broke up and there began an exodus from the country to the town.

As India becomes more and more industrialised, the mobility of man will become a constant factor, the bare feet giving place to the wheels of the bicycle; the bullock-cart, the camel and the horse, to the lorry. And, maybe, we will have to invent another poetic image, more in consonance with the dynamic spirit of our age.
THE KISS OR "WHERE EACH IS BOTH"

The various phases of human love reflect the stages of spiritual progress. The union of the lovers is given an esoteric meaning in the allegories of the loves of the cowherd-God Krishna and his beloved Radha and her companions, the milkmaids. Krishna symbolises the supreme soul, while Radha and the milkmaids represent the souls of men, perennially in dalliance in the forests of Brindaban on the banks of the river Jumna.

This illicit love, always involving the desire of human beings to become one with the Supreme, is the way of salvation.

In the doctrine of Sahaja, 'spontaneous romantic love', the adoration of young and beautiful girls was prescribed as the path of spiritual evolution and ultimate emancipation.

As the poet has said:

'THE SPIRIT (PURUSHA) PLAYING, THE SPIRIT LONGING,
THE SPIRIT WITH FANCY (YOGA-MAYA) CREATING ALL,
SURRENDERS HIMSELF TO THE BLISS (ANANDA) OF LOVE...
AMID THE FLOWERS OF HIS CREATION (PRAKRITI),
HE LINGERS IN A KISS...'

55 The kiss — Sculpture from the Kailasha Temple, Ellura
56 Shiva's Tandava Dance, sculpture from Ellura
THE DANCE OF SIVA

The dance of Siva represents the images of a dynamic God, the creator, the destroyer and the preserver of the universe, the one who holds the balance of the world.

The story is told that, in the forest of Taragam, lived many materialistic heretics. The God Siva descended upon this jungle to argue with them, accompanied by the God Vishnu, disguised as a beautiful woman, and the devotee Ati Seshan. The heretics were busy arguing among themselves.

As they saw Siva, they directed their anger against this enemy of their faith and tried to destroy him. They created a tiger from the sacrificial fires, and let it loose upon the God. Siva smiled gently, seized it and, with the nail of his little finger, stripped it off its skin, and wrapped it around himself. Thus the God gathered around him the tiger fury of mankind.

The heretics then threw a terrible serpent on Him. Siva seized the snake from the tail and wrapped it like a garland around his neck. In this way he wreathed around him the snake cunning of the universe.

Then the God began to dance.

But there rushed upon him a monster, in the shape of a malignant dwarf, called Mulayaka.

The God Siva pressed the tip of his toe upon the dwarf and broke his back, so that the creature writhed upon the ground, thus Siva destroyed the evil of mankind. His last foe crushed, Siva resumed his cosmic dance in the circle of fire by which he maintains the balance of existence.

So the peasants pray:

THE DANCING FOOT, THE SOUND OF TINKLING BELL,
THE SONGS THAT ARE SUNG, AND THE VARYING STEPS.
THE FORM ASSUMED BY OUR DANCING GOD,
FIND OUT THESE WITHIN YOURSELF,
THEN SHALL YOUR FOLLIES FALL AWAY.
After the fabled Flood of the Bible, the Geography of India probably changed, revealing the high range of the Himalayan mountains, some of the peaks of these mountains being the highest in the world.

In the earliest holy books, the fear of the impassable barriers of these mountains evokes from men worship and prayer. And the Gods were assigned these domains, the peaks of the Mount Meru and Mount Kailasa being the highest heavens in the Hindu mythology.

The inaccessible regions of the Himalayas became the retreats of many sages, who wished to practise asceticism in the heart of nature, away from human habitations. And holiness surrounded the Himalayas until recent times when the tallest peaks were conquered by mountaineers.

On the lower fringes of the Himalayas are lovely lush valleys, with beautiful lakes and rivers, springing from them, and in these remote areas there are small villages and townships of people of mixed Indo-Chinese and Central Asian stocks, who are mostly Buddhist by religion, except in Nepal and Gharwal, where Hindu emigrants travelled and settled down some centuries ago.

Sparse agriculture on the slopes of the mountains, sheep and cattle farming, as well as weaving, are the mainstay of the hill folk who still retain their old ways of life.
THE GOLDEN TEMPLE

The Golden Temple at Amritsar (pool of nectar) was founded by Guru Arjan at the end of the fifteenth century for the pure worship of the Sikh faith.

The first prophet of this Sikh religion was Guru Nanak, who sought to synthesise the best elements of the Hindu religion with Islam. The Sikhs believed in one God and were against the Hindu division of caste. Their way of worship for God-realisation was similar to that of the mystic Hindus, but they eschewed ritual and image worship.

Guru Arjan, the fifth prophet in elected succession to Guru Nanak, was the contemporary of the fourth Mughal Emperor, Jahangir. He arranged the writings of his predecessors in the Adi Granth, which is the principal part of the Sikh gospels. He evolved rules of religious and moral conduct for his followers and propagated the teachings of the prophets.

Settling in Amritsar, by a small natural pond, he made this township the focal point for his disciples. And, here, the original pool, the main Sikh Golden Temple, came to be built, with mixed Hindu and Mughal motifs, resulting in a building which had a unique integrity of its own. The present building dates from 1764. But the greater part of the courtyard for circumambulation was added in the 19th century.

The effect of the building is intensified by the main building rising from the centre of the larger tank, which is approached by a causeway of two hundred feet across the water. The reflection of the shrine in the water adds greatly to the fairy-palace atmosphere of the marble shrine, mounted with gold plated, embossed designs and magnificent domes and elegant minarets.
In the course of time, there grew around the main shrine, a complex of buildings, most of which repeat, in their architectural details, the motifs of the central structure, as, for instance, balconied windows thrown out on carved brackets, fluted domes, arches, elliptical curves and other similar embellishments.

The archway on the western side opens into a square and on all four sides of the temple is the pavement of black and white marble.

The main building, as well as the subsidiary structures, are richly decorated with floral designs, either painted in tempera or embossed in metal with a skill which the hereditary artisans in the local bazaars have practised for generations.

The Sun and the Moon, therefore, became the first symbols through which the human mind tried to understand the universe in which he lived.

All the qualities of the active life were associated with Sun, the lord of the day.

The Moon, the ruler of the night, was associated with hidden forces, asleep in the dark womb of mother earth.

One of the earliest hymns *Gayatri* in the *Rig Veda*, celebrates the sun, and is still recited by millions of people in offering water oblations from uplifted hands to the beneficent Sun, the giver of life.
There is a continuity in the tradition of Buddhist art from India to Ceylon, linking the monuments of the mainland to those of the little island by an inner chain of causality.

From about the year 101-77 B.C. when the King Dutra Gemnu unified the island kingdom of Lanka, great works began to be undertaken in the country.

The creative arts reached their zenith in the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. and were revived during the mediaeval period (8th to 10th century A.D.).

The architecture and sculpture in the ruined cities of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, as well as buildings and paintings on the lion rock of Sigiriya (479-497 A.D.), show some of the most sublime achievements of the creative imagination.

The monuments fall into three broad groups: a classical period (before the 8th century A.D.); a mediaeval period (9th to 14th century A.D.); and a late mediaeval period (15th century to 1815 A.D.).

During the reign of King Devaanam-piya Tissa of Ceylon (247-207 B.C.) the Buddhist Emperor of India, Asoka, had sent his son, Mahinda, and, later, his daughter, Sanghamitta, to the island kingdom as apostles of the religion of Buddhism which was then at its height in India. A symbolic branch of the Bodhi tree of Gaya, under which the Buddha had attained enlightenment, was brought to Ceylon and planted at Anuradhapura.

So the ceremonial mound-graves in which the relics of the Buddha were buried, called Stupas in India and Dagobas in Ceylon, came to be built in Anuradhapura.
These hemispherical domes rise from the lower courses, which rest on the ground on a single square basement reached by four stairways. Above the dome is a small square enclosure and a railed pavilion, called 'citadel of the Gods'. On the top of this is a pointed ringed spire representing an umbrella. The relic chamber was a large cell inside the mass of the dome. Many of these Dagobas were built in Anuradhapura between 244 B.C. and the mediaeval period. Large quantities of granite and limestone were available in the country around Anuradhapura. Therefore, it was inevitable that stone should have been so widely used for building and sculpture. Sometimes the natural layout of stone have been incorporated into the architectural and decorative schemes, and, more often, the carver's skill has been expended on hollowing caves out of rock. For instance, reliefs of elephants and lions have been carved out, sporting among lotuses so that the animals seem to grow out of the very configuration of the stone. There are semi-circular Moonstones at the entrance to a staircase, with animal processions and foliage designs, peculiar to Ceylon. And, under the influence of the mainland of India, specially from the early Buddhist art of Amravati, there are beautifully proportioned guard stones, dwarfs, snakes, with three, four or seven hoods, of exquisite workmanship.

About the fourth to the seventh century A.D., the influence of the Indian Gupta sculpture was felt in the Issarmuniya elephant reliefs and the Man and Woman carvings.

The buildings and sculptures of Polonnaruwa, the second ancient capital of Ceylon (769 A.D. to 1240 A.D.), were more dramatic in their appeal. A good deal of the beauty and splendour owes itself to the genius of
King Parakrama Bahu, warrior, student, artist and administrator, whose eyes are said to have been 'long like the lily'.

Among Parakrama's buildings was a seven storied palace, with walls ten feet thick, a temple for the relic of the Buddha's tooth. But the remains of his many constructions are scattered over a park-like space only recently cleared of jungle.

The most spectacular of the Polonnaruwa monuments is, perhaps, the rock shrine, 'the cave of the spirits of knowledge'. Out of a rock face twenty five feet high, the ancient sculptors scooped out a cave in which they chiselled, from solid rock, a giant Buddha, noble in clarity of line and in detail of carving, seated on a decorated pedestal beneath a stone canopy. On each side of the cave they hewed, out of living rock, towering figures outlined against the pure empyrean of the sky.

On the one side is a seated Buddha, on the other side is the great reclining Buddha, radiating strength and repose with the upright figure of the favourite disciple, Ananda, at his head, staring with folded arms, through the surroundings trees.

And there is a colossus of the King Parakrama Bahu himself, in Polonnaruwa, turning his face away from the city he had rebuilt and ruled, seeking consolation in the book of law, written on palm leaves which he holds in his ageless hands. Polonnaruwa did not long survive the death of this great ruler, being abandoned in 1240. The Sinhalese kings shifted about, until they rested near Colombo, where the Portuguese found them and the new era of European domination began.
THE ORIGIN OF THE ELEPHANT

The creation of elephants was holy, and for the profit of sacrifice to the gods, and especially for the welfare of kings. Therefore it is clear that elephants must be zealously tended. After the creation of the Sun from a golden egg, the Unborn (Creator) took solemnly in his two hands the two gleaming half shells of that egg, exhibited (to him) by the brahmanical sages, and chanted seven verses at once.

Thereupon (from one shell) the elephant Airavata was born, seven other noble elephants, i.e. the eight elephants of the ‘quarters’ or regions were severally born, through the chanting.

Thus eight elephants were born from the (cosmic) eggshell held in his right hand. And from that in his left in turn eight cows were born, their consorts. And, in the course of time, those elephants, their many sons and grandsons, etc. endowed with spirit and might ranged at will over the forests, rivers, and mountains of the whole world.

And the (eight) noble elephants (of the quarters) went to the battle of gods and demons, as vehicles of the lords of the quarters, Indra, Agni, and the rest. Then, in fright, they ran away to Virinca (Brahma). Knowing this, the spirit of Must was created by Fate (Brahma); when it had been implanted in them, infuriated, they annihilated the host of demons, and went with Indra, and the rest, each to his separate quarter.

The cosmic egg was characterised by heat, and elephants were born from the egg; being tormented with the heat from birth, they are gratified by being deluged with cool water, by dust and mud and the like. Therefore, water is the life of the elephants. Hence one shall tend elephants with water freely; for from that their bodily humors became calm.

Nilakantha: Matanga-Lila or The Sport of Elephants

An elephant’s ear
After the death of Gautama Buddha the devoted followers of him evolved many myths and stories about the Master. During his lifetime, when he preached the gospel of compassion and tenderness towards all beings, and the eight-fold path of good deeds and good thoughts and words, the Buddha emphasized the need for pure thought and deprecated image worship. But the needs of the human heart for the image soon evolved a pantheon around the figure of Gautama.

All the incidents of his life were embellished with stories of his perfection; several incidents of his primary lives during which he was supposed to be a Bodhisatva, that is to say, aspirant towards the Buddhahood, were described in intimate detail; and imaginary incidents were woven around his death. He was supposed to have attained Parinirvana as he lay down to expire his breath.

There are several colossal images of the Buddha in India and Ceylon, which show him, lying down on his side, in the attitude of Parinirvana. His immediate disciples are grouped around his body; and hosts of angels are flying about in the upper space, as though spreading the news of the exaltation of the Enlightened One, beyond life and death, to Nirvana, the ultimate void.

67 The majesty of the 'Sleeping Buddha', Polonnaruwa, Ceylon

68 'Sleeping Buddha'. The death of the Enlightened One.

69 Feet of the 'Sleeping Buddha'

70 On the way to the Sigiriya rocks
पंजाब राज्य समिति के अध्यक्ष डा. अंतर्गत नीलांश नंदगुप्ता प्रमुख के अनुरोध पर 1994 से 1996 तक अपनी सेवा करते थे।

1997 में उन्होंने अपनी सेवा को बंद करने के बाद वापसी कर दी।
Sigiriya is one of the famous ancient sites in Ceylon.

There is a common belief, based on the evidence of hieroglyphs on the rock shelters, that it was a human habitation since the earliest times. But it came into prominence when King Kasapa I (479–497 A.D.) made it a citadel. We last hear of it as being occupied in 1153 A.D., after which it seems to have remained obscure until 1828 A.D. Since then each year something new has been found out about this rock.

The name Sigiriya comes from Siha-Gri which means lion rock. Oral tradition has it that lions inhabited the caves of this rock; also frescoes of lions were said to be on its walls until about 1876 A.D.; and the remains of a gigantic lion in brick work can still be seen.

The rock is a mass of banded gneiss, with various types of granite in it. The covering layers of earth, along with the softer materials probably disintegrated long ago. Man utilised the cavities of disintegration
at the sides for building an approach road to the top, as also for making watch caves and ceremonial chambers, while the hollows upon the top were converted into wells and cisterns. 

About six hundred feet high the top level covers about three acres of even surface which was extensively built upon. 

The palaces on the top presumably had frescoes on the walls, of which, however, there are no remains now. But there are two sequestered rock pockets on the verticle western face of the cliff in which there are frescoes of the fifth century in a fairly good state of preservation. 

In their style, these wall paintings are reminiscent of the frescoes in the famous Ajanta caves of the Deccan, in Central India. The figures mainly show celestial beauties with their attendant females showering a rain of flowers. As all the figures are cut off a little below the waist line, with cloud effects, there has been much conjecture as to what their complete costumes might have been like. But a western rock shelter, at the foot, supplied the answer by revealing faded frescoes of females in the Indian dhoti (loin cloth) garment. Anyhow, these charming damsels were conceived as nymphs of heaven rather than as mortals. 

The technique of the frescoes seems to have been somewhat akin to that of Ajanta. The outline of the figure was pressed into the moist plaster and painted afterwards. The colours used were red, yellow, green and black. 

There is a conjecture that the somewhat Mongoloid eyes of the females may be due to Chinese influence, but there is no exact proof of this speculative flight.

(Continued on page 91)
The pathway leads to the northern ledge and then ascends between the paws of the gigantic brick lion. After this there is no wall, but grooves in the rock indicate that it bifurcated: one branch protected the approach of the eastern gash-like cave, the other ascended to the top and encircled the three acres of flat space.

Twenty-five flights of steps led up to the palace. There is a dais for the throne. There is a pond or reservoir. And then there are two northern and two southern walls among the numerous ruins of buildings. The pavement is of crystalline lime stone.

In the 5th Century, the dazzling white citadel, 600 feet above the ground level, with gleaming walls around the rock must have been a sight for the Gods.
The waters bear away defilement. They are even invoked to cleanse us from moral guilt, the sins of violence, cursing and lying. They bestow remedies, healing, long life and immortality. The waters are symbolised as young women, celestial daughters, wives, and mothers. They are beseeched for their precious gifts, as they are supposed to bring ghee, milk and honey. They are called ‘wealth giving’ because they fertilise the earth and cause plentiful harvests. They are represented as delighting the gods and thus causing them to grant favours, and they have the power to grant boons:

I CALL THE WATERS, GODDESSES, WHEREIN OUR CATTLE QUENCH THEIR THIRST,
OBLATIONS TO THE STREAMS BE GIVEN.
AMRIT IS IN THE WATERS. IN THE WATERS THERE IS HEALING BALM.
BE SWIFT, YE GODS, TO GIVE THEM PRAISE.
WITHIN THE WATERS - SOMA THUS HATH TOLD ME - DWELL ALL BALMS THAT HEAL,
AND AGNI, HE WHO BLESSETH ALL. THE WATERS HOLD ALL MEDICINE,
O WATERS, TEEM WITH MEDICINE TO KEEP MY BODY SAFE FROM HARM,
SO THAT I LONG MAY SEE THE SUN!
WHATEVER SIN IS FOUND IN ME, WHATEVER EVIL I HAVE WROUGHT,
IF I HAVE LIED OR FALSELY SWORN, WATERS, REMOVE IT FROM ME.

Rig Veda 1. 2. 3. 18. 22.

KIND BE THE GODDESSES TO LEND US HELP!
MAY THEIR STREAMS BRING US HEALTH AND WEALTH!

Sam Veda 1. 1. 3. 13.
THE ROAD MENDERS

All along the roads lie piles of stones. They are the material from which the highway will be re-inforced, when the heavy traffic, or the monsoon, has made pits and ruts.

And, at intervals of a few miles, are the road menders, busy breaking stones, or pouring tar on the pebbles, or building earth-works on the sides to protect the edges of the finished highway.

The labour on the road is a hard and unremitting toil, since it must go on eternally. The poet Tagore was obviously deeply impressed by this kind of work when he wrote:

'I am, where the road menders are, building the roads'.

The Idol house began to be known as Pagoda, when the Buddhist style temple travelled from India to the countries of the Indian Ocean. Ornamented and painted often in the brightest colours, the niche, where the image of the Enlightened One rests, is carved either into a side of the rock or built into a shrine under a mound-like temple. The hundreds of Pagodas built in the mediaeval period, at Pagan, in Burma, vie with those built in Ceylon, Indonesia and other parts of South East Asia. Once the homes of pure worship, the Pagodas have tended to substitute the image for the Buddha, as, indeed idols everywhere tend to do. The Pagoda in Anuradhapura brings millions of devout Buddhist worshippers together at certain festivals in the year, particularly during the spring festival.
CONTEMPLATION OR FAR-SIGHT

‘When the body-dweller, controlling the powers of the soul that seize upon what is their own, in sounds and the rest, glows, then he sees the self (atman) extended in the world.’

Thus sings the poet of the ancient epic, the Mahabharata. The attitude of withdrawal for contemplation, or the enjoyment of leisure was, however, the natural accompaniment of an agrarian and pastoral civilisation, when the harvests depended on the bounty of the Gods.

The fates have changed in Asia, with the entry of the machine civilisation. And the same dynamic forces which made the energetic western world concentrate on man’s worldly goods, today dominate the East. Science is the new religion, humanised, to some extent, by values of the interior world which have been so long insisted upon in the traditional life.

Perhaps the synthesis of the outer life and the inner, of work and leisure for the cultivation of the soul, will come as a new gospel from emergent Asia.